

The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. Unlike traditional regulatory approaches to environmental protection, the NEP targets a broad range of issues and engages local communities in the process. The program focuses not just on improving water quality in an estuary, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system — its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values.

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# Long Island Sound



## What Makes Long Island Sound Special?

- The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) began in 1985 when Congress appropriated funds for EPA and the states of Connecticut and New York to research, monitor, and assess water quality in the Sound. In 1988, the Sound was designated as an “estuary of national significance” through EPA’s National Estuary Program.
- The Sound provides feeding, breeding, nesting, and nursery areas for a diversity of plant and animal life, and contributes an estimated \$5.5 billion per year to the regional economy from boating, commercial and sport fishing, swimming, and sight seeing.

## Why Does Long Island Sound Need Special Attention?

- More than 8 million people live in the Long Island Sound watershed, and the associated development has increased some types of pollution, altered land surfaces, reduced open spaces, and restricted access to the Sound.
- Despite significant improvements in water quality and coastal zone management over the past 25 years, serious problems remain, particularly hypoxia (low dissolved oxygen), which is caused by excessive nitrogen loading from sewage treatment plants and polluted runoff into the Sound, and the historic loss and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat.



## Progress/Goals for the Future

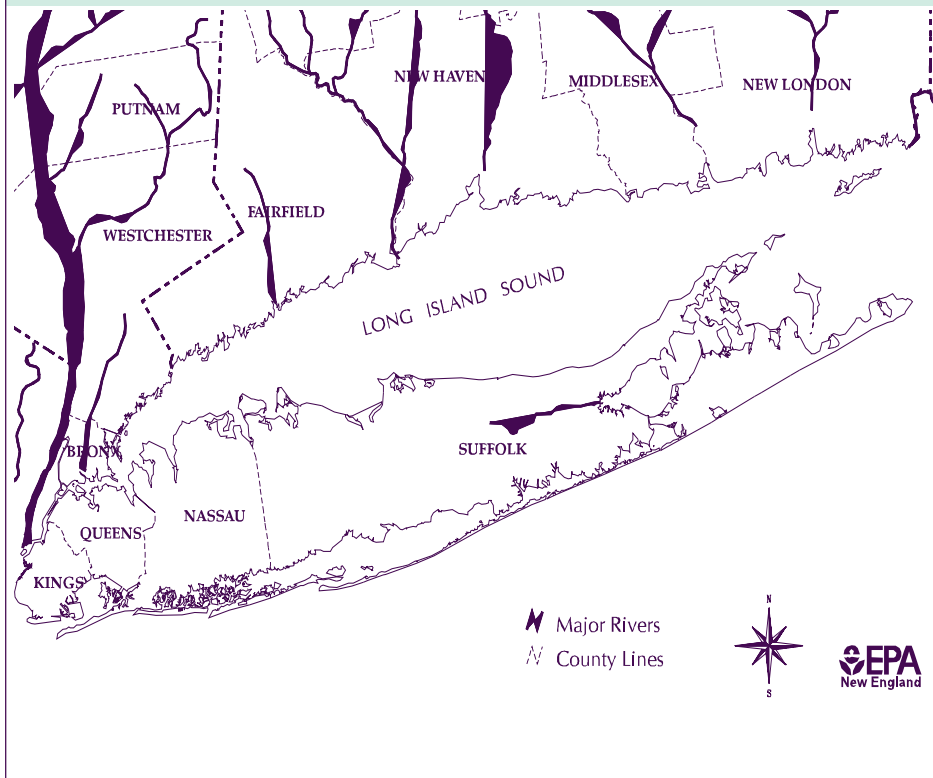
### What Partnership Progress Has Been Made?

- In 1998, the LISS reached historic agreements to reduce human-caused nitrogen loads to the Sound from Connecticut and New York sources by 58.5% by the year 2014 (described in the report, *Phase III Actions for Hypoxia Management*) and to restore 2,000 acres and 100 river miles of natural habitat by 2008 (described in the *Long Island Sound Habitat Restoration Strategy*).

### What Are the Major Actions Planned for 2000?

- Approve and implement a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for nitrogen discharges into Long Island Sound that incorporates the Phase III plan and outlines the actions necessary to achieve the state water quality standards for dissolved oxygen.
- The states will begin to modify sewage treatment plant discharge permits with nitrogen effluent limits designed to meet the goals of the TMDL.
- The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection will propose a nitrogen effluent trading program that may help the state meet its nitrogen reduction target in a more cost-effective way.
- The LISS partners will complete ten high priority habitat restoration projects in Connecticut and New York, including fish passage and tidal wetland restoration, both identified in the Long Island Sound Habitat Restoration Strategy.
- The LISS will issue an “environmental indicators” report describing the health of Long Island Sound as measured by a wide range of water quality and habitat parameters.

# Long Island Sound



## Who Are The Partners?

EPA New England • Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection • New York Department of Environmental Conservation • New York Department of State • New York City Department of Environmental Protection • USDA/NRCS • New York Sea Grant • Long Island Sound Watershed Alliance • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • U.S. Geological Survey • University of Connecticut • University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System • SUNY Stony Brook • New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission • Interstate Sanitation Commission

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## Background

- **Getting Resources:** With leadership from the Long Island Sound Congressional Caucus and support from local environmental groups, Congress passed legislation in 1990 establishing the EPA Long Island Sound Office with its own funding authorization.
- **Making Plans:** In 1994, the LISS completed the *Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* (CCMP), which describes the major problems affecting the health of the Sound's ecosystem and the actions necessary to solve them, and outlines a "phased" plan for reducing nitrogen loads to the Sound and recommends development of a regional habitat restoration strategy.
- **Measuring Progress:** The LISS has provided funding for an ambient water quality monitoring program to measure changes in dissolved oxygen levels since 1991, and both states monitor sewage treatment plant effluent to measure changes in nitrogen loads to the Sound.



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Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.